Discord

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Summary

Will has been thriving at university but there are many unresolved issues. Hannibal decides to test Will with an uncomfortable dinner party... oh, and Hannibal bought Will a suit. Bella is kind of awesome. Part of the Evolution series.

“Making a suit this expensive appear vulgar is a true talent,” Hannibal said with a tsk as he gave Will a once over.

“You picked it out,” Will reminded him. He was lounging in one of Hannibal’s obscenely over expensive chairs in the foyer of Hannibal’s house.

“You’re ruining the lines of the suit sitting like that and ‘pick it out’ makes it sound as if we picked it off a rack-“

“God forbid,” Will snorted. “I made it look good.”

“Passable, perhaps. This suit was personally tailored by a master trailer with imported fabric-“

“That you hand picked,” Will interrupted again.

“Stop interrupting, it’s-”

“Rude,” Will said and smirked. “Your personal tailor. The man’s a genius. I know. I think he’ll tell you anything to make a sale. I also think he may be colour blind.”

“Why I tolerate you, I don’t know.”

“I’m amusing among other things,” Will said. “And I make thousand-some dollar suits look vulgar, which makes you look even better, Doctor Lecter.”

“Do wear a tie at least,” Hannibal said, running his fingers over Will’s collar bone exposed by his open collar.

“You don’t really want me to wear the tie,” Will said. “Then you wouldn’t be able to do that.”

Hannibal hummed and ran his fingers to the other side. “Always challenging me.”

“It’s part of the allure,” Will said. “I’ll wear the tie if you really want me to, but I hate it. I’ll be tugging at it all night. Which would be-“

“Rude,” Hannibal said. “Now we wouldn’t want that.”

Will nodded. “Not in front of your colleagues.”

“Not in front of my colleagues,” Hannibal agreed.

“Are you sure we want to do this?” Will asked.

“There is nothing to hide,” Hannibal said. “Trying to do so would give into everything Jack has been whispering about these past six months. You’re a 24 year old man with an outstanding engineering career ahead of him. You have one successful term under your belt in one of the most prestigious facilities in the country. You’re first term marks are in the top 2%.”

“It’s much easier to avoid getting into yelling arguments with an engineering prof than one in arts,” Will said. “Numbers are numbers. We can usually agree on that. Instead of being the odd one, I’m barely eccentric.”

“When I last had coffee with the Dean, she told me everyone adores you.”

“That’s because I’m not the strangest one there,” Will said, then laughed.

“Yes, I’ve met your friends.”

“Never thought I’d say that. You know not all the rumours on campus about us are bad?”

“Oh, really?” Hannibal asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Sure, there’s the Alana camp. Poor, poor Alana. Poor, poor abandoned Alana. Poor Alana set aside for a piece of white trash. Poor, bitchy Alana-“

“Will-“

“Yeah, yeah. I know,” Will said. “Play nice. Play the role. I might’ve added the bitchy part myself,” Will said. “Why are we doing this again?”

“Because social niceties are expected of people,” Hannibal said. “We do aim to stay hidden in plain sight.”

“And because you want to see what happens,” Will said. “I’m well aware this is a test, Hannibal. I know you want to see everyone in the same room and see what happens.”

Hannibal shrugged and didn’t deny it. “A social experiment then.”

“You would have me eat with that woman at the same table.”

“That woman is my colleague and a tenured professor. If you are to be my true partner, then you will need to act as such,” Hannibal said. “You will need to control yourself and play the social games to some degree.”

“I can’t believe she agreed to come.”

“She’s curious about you,” Hannibal said.

“Playing the part of the scorned woman,” Will said. “Not everyone feels sorry for her. Some people on campus view us as quite romantic. Apparently a janitor seducing a prof is very anti-establishment.”

“Is it now?”

“Apparently. Very ‘Good Will Hunting’. And apparently you haven’t been as much of a vengeful ass this term, so that’s a big bonus,” Will said, then laughed at Hannibal’s offended expression. “Now, now. You’re still the surge of the faculty. Undergrads piss themselves after

crossing your shadow and grad students fling themselves off the top of the closest tall building after your formative assessment."

"Egregious," Hannibal said.

"Amusing," Will added. "Others are saying I have you wrapped around my little finger... that you're besotted."

"I am no such thing."

Will smiled up at Hannibal. He was sitting in an overly stuffed leather chair, sprawled with his legs over one of the arms. "Of course not, Doctor."

"Fond, perhaps," Hannibal said, brushing Will's curls off his forehead. "Overly indulgent."

"The suit was your idea," Will reminded him. "You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig-"

"Will," Hannibal cut him off in a warning tone. He laid his hand on Will's cheek.

"I'm sorry," Will said. "Pig wasn't the best choice of words considering tonight's a dinner party."

Hannibal made an agreeable sound, glancing down at Will. He ran his thumb along Will's cheek bone and then slowly traced his upper lip.

"You are anything but a pig," Hannibal said. "What are you above anything else, Will?"

"Yours," Will answered.

Will gently bit Hannibal thumb.

"Always mine," Hannibal said.

Will dared a quick and another nip, then asked, "Tonight?"

"If you impress me." Hannibal said and patted Will on the cheek one last time. He began to fuss with Will's collar. "Now, you will wear a tie. This tie."

Hannibal pulled a tie out of his pocket and began to wind it around Will's neck under the collar.

"That's your favourite tie. Are you marking your territory?"

"I like to call it a Eldredge knot," Hannibal said. "Whatever other conclusions our guests draw is incidental."

Hannibal fussed until the fancy knot was to his liking. Then he held the tie, almost like a leash, wrapping it around his fist several time while holding direct eye contact with Will. Will was beginning to breathe heavily and lean close when...

The door bell rang.

“No,” Will groaned as Hannibal dropped the tie and smoothed it against Will’s chest. “It’s not fair.”

“That would be our guests,” Hannibal said with a smirk.

“Showtime,” Will said and rubbed his hand over his face, squirming in the chair.

“Secure your facade.”

Hannibal walked over to the door swiftly and opened it with a grand flourish.

“Welcome,” Hannibal said. “Jack and Bella, how delightful to see you. It’s been too long.”

“Delightful isn’t what I would called it,” Jack grumbled, but grunted when Bella elbowed him in the ribs. “Hello, Hannibal.”

“Jack,” Hannibal greeted. “Bella, I see you worked your magic and actually got Jack to accept my invitation.”

Bella came into the foyer first and grabbed Jack’s hand, pulling him inside. “I figure it’s about time we all made amends,” Bella said looked over to Will, where he was still splayed on the chair. “For Will’s sake. Will, how are you?”

Will took a settling breath and Hannibal could see him settle his Human Suit into place as Hannibal had taught him. Will got up and and put out his hand to shake Bella’s hand, even managing a brief moment of eye contact.

“I’m fine,” Will said. “Good evening, Bella.”

“You’re looking...” Bella’s gaze flicked over Will’s untamed curls, expensive suit and lingered on Hannibal’s tie. “Polished tonight.”

“Thanks,” Will said, trying to infuse a little charm into his tone.

“Nice tie,” Jack said. “Real subtle, Hannibal. You might as well have pissed all over-”

“Jack!” Bella snapped. “I’m so sorry. This is supposed to be an opportunity for everyone to make nice. Maybe we should leave.”

“No,” Will said. His jaw was clenched and he stepped away from Bella and Jack towards Hannibal. “Stay.”

The door bell rang again.

“That would be Alana,” Jack said with a grin. “Fun times.”

“Jack,” Bella said in a warning tone.

“What?” Jack said. “He invited her.”

Hannibal opened the door and Alana was indeed standing there, holding a bottle of wine. She took in the scene before her and asked, “Bad timing?”

“Hello, Dr. Bloom,” Hannibal said.

“It’s just getting interesting,” Jack said.

Alana glanced over at Will in the suit and Hannibal’s tie. “Hannibal’s been playing dress up, I see.”

“Alana, shut your mouth,” Bella snapped.

Jack grabbed his wife’s elbow. “Bella, you can’t-“

“You shut up, too,” Bella said and shook off Jack’s grasp. “All of you can stow the academic snarkiness and pretentious bullshit for one goddamn night. I am not leaving before I’ve eaten Hannibal’s delicious food. We can at least attempt to be civil. I’m sorry, Hannibal, that was rude, but I’ve had enough of all this.”

“That is quite all right, Bella,” Hannibal said, his words calm and controlled. “I was hoping to extend an olive branch this evening. Maybe-“

“Maybe we should start with this,” Bella said and snatched the wine bottle out of Alana’s hand and held it out to Will. “Will, be a dear and open this, please. Ignore all of them. You look handsome and my husband puts the Jack in jackass.”

Will grabbed the bottle and glanced at Hannibal. Only when Hannibal slightly nodded did Will leave the room.

“You might as well have him on a leash,” Jack grumbled.

“Don’t give him ideas,” Alana added.

“Seriously?” Bella looked at a both of them in disbelief then yelled out, “Make it a big glass, Will! I might as we be comfortable while we do this. Your lounge is this way, Hannibal?”

Hannibal nodded and followed after Bella as walked in the lounge.

“He’s meant for more than this,” Jack said and waved his hand around the lavish room.

“I like this,” Will said, coming back into the room with a tray topped with filled wine glasses. “It’s certainly better than mopping your floors.”

Will handed Bella the largest and fullest glass and she smiled at him. “Thanks.”

“That job was just temporary,” Jack said. “It was merely a stop on the journey to more important work. Work that would properly use your ability.”

“And use him,” Hannibal said. He walked over to Will and laid his palm on Will’s lower back.

“I’m happy, Jack,” Will said. “I like engineering. I can fix and make machines without losing myself. I feel safe. I feel safe for the first time since my dad died...”

“I’m sorry, kid,” Jack said. “It is the single largest regret of my life. It’s why I try to look out for you.”

“You’re not my father,” Will said and moved closer Hannibal.

“Neither is he,” Jack said, glaring at Hannibal. “I knew you had issues but didn’t know they were daddy issues.”

Bella gasped and stepped away from her husband. Hannibal wrapped a restraining arm around Will’s waist, pulling him close.

“Jack,” Alana said. “That was uncalled for. Hannibal is a lot of things, but he’s not... that.”

“Isn’t he?” Jack asked. “We’ve all been dancing around it. Polite. Politically correct. Hannibal is older. He’s stable. Will is anything but stable and he’s too young for Hannibal. Hannibal’s taking advantage of him. Look at how he’s dressed him... like a fucking boy toy.”

The room was silent.

Everyone stared at Jack and then Will.

Waiting.

Will blinked.

He felt Hannibal’s hidden anger and seething.

He felt Bella’s horror at Jack and kindness for him.

He felt Alana’s pity for him and regret for what could have been with Hannibal. Her attraction to Hannibal.

He felt Jack’s guilt, sorrow and sense of responsibility.

He felt Hannibal wanting to kill all of them... except maybe Bella.

Will pushed past the others emotions. He dug for his own emotions. His own true wants and desires.

Did he want the path Hannibal had all mapped out or did a part of him want what Jack promised? Yes. Yes, he wanted to help people like Jack promised, but oh did he also want the darkness and freedom that Hannibal offered.

Will knew what he wanted. He wanted everything. He wanted his path. He wanted to stay in the darkness and end the monsters that preyed on the innocent. Will wanted to do that with Hannibal at his side. With Hannibal... not for Hannibal.

Will blinked. He shook his head coming back to himself. The others were starring. He had strayed too far for too long.

“I am my own man, ” Will said.

“Bravo, my tea cup,” Hannibal whispered into his ear. “You are becoming your own man.”

Jack coughed. “Will-”

“No,” Will said. “No. We’re going to eat now. Hannibal made pork.”

“I made Mørbradgryde,” Hannibal added. “It’s one of Will’s favourites.”

Will smiled at the foreign food name. “He made pork in a cream sauce.”

“Philistine,” Hannibal said with fondness. “Do entertain our guests while I go get the appetizers.”

Hannibal left the room with a quick stride. Will knew he was bringing his temper and instincts into check.

“So, Will,” Bell said, forceably changing the conversation. “Engineering?”

“Yeah,” Will said.

She took a long gulp of wine and asked, “Do you have friends?”

“Other than Hannibal?” Jack added.

“Yes,” Will said. “Beverley, Jimmy and Brian.”

Jack almost dropped his wine glass. “Them?”

“What’s wrong with them?” Will bristled.

“Weren’t they the ones who exploded elephant tooth paste all over the President’s Office?” Alana asked.

“Allegedly,” Will answered quickly.

Alana smirked and sipped her wine.

“Hannibal must love them,” she said.

“They are amusing in their own way,” Hannibal said as he came into the lounge with an ornate silver plater laden with appetizers. “Liver pâté?”

Alana snatched a triangular flatbread topped with herbs and pare. She are half in a very unladylike manner while Hannibal watched carefully.

“Despite everything else, you are a genius in the kitchen,” Alana said. “It’s delicious.”

Hannibal nodded in recognition of the compliment. “I will return in a moment with more tapas.”

Hannibal left and Alana popped the rest of the flatbread into he mouth. While Bella was busy tearing a verbal strip off of Jack, she leaned in close to Will.

“He’ll tire of you,” Alana said. “Someone like you cannot hold his interest.”

“I am-“

“It’s not your fault,” Alana cut him off. “I don’t blame you. In fact, I feel sorry for you. I feel under different circumstances we could be friends. When... and it will be when. When he tires of you, come find me and we’ll have a drink.”

“Hannibal wants me to be civil with you,” Will said.

“And you must always do what Hannibal wants,” Alana said. “Poor thing.”

The emotions he felt in that was truly his own. He wanted to kill her. Slowly.

Hannibal’s hand settled on Will’s shoulder, restraining fingers digging into the muscles. With his free hand, he held out a liver pâté to feed Will.

“Eat,” Hannibal commanded.

Will blinked. He glanced up at Hannibal. Keeping constant eye contact with Hannibal, Will slowly ate the offering. He chewed and kept eye contact. After he swallowed, he quickly licked Hannibal’s finger cleaned.

“Seriously?” Alana said. “l could write a paper about you two. A journal article won’t even begin to cover your issues.”

Hannibal smiled and ran his thumb over Will’s lips.

“You keep that up and I’m leaving,” Jack complained.

Hannibal patted Will’s cheek and ignored the comments of his guests. He only had eyes for Will and Will could feel his emotions...

A mingle of....

Possessiveness.

Protectiveness.

Desire.

The ever lurking monster.

A promise...

Will was enamoured.

“I’m afraid that I’m here to stay,” Will said. “So, if you’d like to leave, can you do that now so I can eat?”

Bella’s genuine laugh rang through the room. She held up her wine glass. “A toast to our hosts,” Bella said. “To an interesting evening and an even more interesting year ahead of us.”

END.

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